

STANDARD 4:**Providing care and support for survivors**

We provide a compassionate response to survivors of abuse when they disclose their experiences and we offer them support, advice, care and compassion.

4.1 We follow established protocols for responding to survivors.

“Words cannot fully express my sorrow for the abuse you suffered. You are precious children of God who should always expect our protection, our care and our love. I am profoundly sorry that your innocence was violated by those whom you trusted. In some cases, the trust was betrayed by members of your own family, in other cases by priests who carry a sacred responsibility for the care of souls. In all circumstances, the betrayal was a terrible violation of human dignity.”

(Pope Francis speaking to victims of sexual abuse, September 2015, USA)

- 4.1.1 The term ‘survivor’ is often used in relation to those who have suffered abuse. One should not assume that identifying as a ‘survivor’ means that recovery is complete. The work of finding healing is not without cost and the recovery of a lost childhood is impossible.
- 4.1.2 It is also important to note that some do not believe that they have ‘survived’. They might not only continue to feel victims of abuse but might also experience any contact with the Church as reinforcing their perception of the Church as abusive and harmful. Moreover, some would identify as ‘victim-survivors’ who struggle to hold on to a sense of hope.
- 4.1.3 Some who have suffered abuse within the Church might also choose not to define themselves by either term ‘victim’ or ‘survivor’. The sensitive use of language must be a consideration at all times. This document will defer to using the term ‘survivors’ but does so whilst mindful of the various ways in which those who have suffered abuse might wish to describe themselves.
- 4.1.4 Survivors of abuse of any form deserve the greatest care and respect. Their courage in coming forward to disclose their experience to personnel within the Church can never be underestimated. So, Church personnel must take care to provide an immediacy of response (as well as sensitive care) to anyone who wishes to talk about the harm they have suffered.
- 4.1.5 Any response from Church personnel should respect the dignity and the woundedness of the survivor who may desire to make choices about how to speak to any Church personnel. (Often a survivor may feel that control and freedom to make choices has been taken away from them.) Safeguarding personnel must therefore be mindful of the importance of respecting and facilitating choices.

- 4.1.6 Once a survivor makes contact with anyone in the Church, this must be referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser who should then offer to meet with the survivor to hear whatever he/she wishes to disclose. Once it has been agreed how the survivor wishes to be contacted, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, ahead of the first meeting, must send an *Information Leaflet on the Process for Survivors*³⁰ together with a letter to the survivor³¹ confirming these points:
- If the allegation has never been reported to the Police, then the survivor must be informed that the Church will report the allegation, whether the accused is alive or deceased. (It should be understood that, in some cases, the survivor might not understand that he/she is making an allegation.)
 - The survivor may contact the Police directly to make an allegation, if he/she has not already done so.
 - The location of the meeting should be safe and private. Offering the survivor a choice about the meeting location is an indication of the respect being afforded to him/her. A requirement to attend a Diocesan Office or other Church building might be traumatic.
 - Although it is important that the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser attends, the choice of gender (and lay, clerical or religious state) of the Church personnel attending is important. The survivor may wish to be accompanied by a friend; this should be discussed and agreed prior to the meeting. The survivor may wish to meet with the Bishop or Major Superior; this should be facilitated but never be imposed.
 - The main purpose of the meeting is for the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser to listen to the survivor who should be encouraged to share what they are seeking from the Church. This is the start of a process that might take some time.
- 4.1.7 At the end of the first meeting, a summary of what decisions or actions were agreed, and the option for a further meeting, should be discussed.

4.2 We follow established protocols for responding to survivors' families.

"The suffering and suicides of people who were abused by clergy [and religious] weigh on my heart, on my conscience and on that of the whole Church. To their families, I offer my feelings of love and pain, and humbly ask forgiveness,"

(Pope Francis, preface to 'Mon Pere, Je Vous Pardonne', February 2017)

- 4.2.1 The typology of a perpetrator of abuse is often that he/she will groom whole families in order to gain trust and find a context in which to abuse children and the vulnerable. The same happens in any context where there are young people and vulnerable adults. The Church is no exception to this behaviour.

³⁰ Section C: Information Leaflet on the Process for Survivors

³¹ Section C: Letter to survivor regarding first meeting with Safeguarding personnel

- 4.2.2 Moreover, the majority of survivors of abuse within Church environments disclose their experience some significant time after the abuse took place. This does not mean that they might not have tried to tell someone at the time when the abuse was happening. Finding the courage to disclose many years later can often be triggered by other events. At that point in the life of a survivor, he/she will have formed new relationships and may possibly have their own family. This will have an impact on their decision to speak about the trauma of abuse.
- 4.2.3 The families of survivors deserve a special care from the Church as they struggle to understand what has happened to their loved ones. Feelings of shock, bewilderment, anger, confusion, shame, guilt and despair are not unusual. Particular attention must be given to these groups:
- **the parents of a survivor of abuse in the Church:** Both parents will be burdened with questioning why they did not notice that something was happening to their child, even if it was 30, 40 or 50 years ago. They might be devastated when they recall the trust they placed in someone from the Church having care of their child.
 - **the siblings of a survivor of abuse in the Church:** Many of the feelings described above will be felt by the siblings of the survivor. It is not inconceivable that some of the siblings were also abused and might have decided not to disclose. Some might feel they should have been aware and they may carry the pain of believing that they had failed in the care of their sibling.
 - **the family of the survivor now:** This will include the survivor's husband, wife, partner, children and others. They will carry a range of emotions and will be seeking to try to understand how best to help and support their loved one.
- 4.2.4 It is important to note that, in each and every situation, emotions will vary. Families may need to spend time in listening as they try to come to terms with the disclosure and to discern what they are looking for from the Church. Respect must also be given to those who will not seek help from the Church and indeed might strongly reject it. So, referral to other support agencies must be considered.
- 4.2.5 At the point of disclosure, the survivor must be asked about any family members, what (if anything) they have been told and what support might be helpful for them. A most important consideration is that the confidentiality of the survivor (in terms of his/her family) must be respected. In some situations, the survivor might not wish to tell any family members, or they may disclose to some family members but not to a parent.

- 4.2.6 A range of options for responding to those family members who are aware of the disclosure might include:
- a meeting with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or other Safeguarding personnel
 - a meeting with the Bishop or Major Superior
 - a referral to the Raphael Counselling Service³²
 - support from Couples Counselling, where appropriate
 - information about and/or referral to other external agencies
 - an opportunity to speak with someone from a Survivor support group
 - an opportunity to speak to a priest who is experienced in listening to the families of survivors
 - an opportunity to speak to someone who has experienced the disclosure by a relative about abuse within the Church.

4.3 We follow established protocols for responding to others.

- 4.3.1 The awareness of abuse in society is evident from the significant media coverage given to individuals and organisations when abuse is disclosed. Within recent years, this heightened awareness has enabled more survivors to come forward and speak about the hurt they have suffered. When a disclosure of abuse is made, even within a limited circle, others are affected. When a disclosure of abuse within the Catholic Church is known, there are many more affected, due to the very nature of the parish communities within which we live and worship.
- 4.3.2 Those whom we might encounter who are not survivors of abuse within the Church, or relatives of survivors, include:
- members of parish communities
 - survivors of abuse outside the Church
 - individuals who have been abused but have chosen not to disclose
 - those who find it difficult to believe that anyone in the Church can abuse
 - those whose faith has been harmed by the scandal of abuse
 - those who want the Church to be accountable and answer questions.
- 4.3.3 Each situation, when someone comes forward to disclose abuse or to seek support having disclosed some time previously, is very different. It is important that each individual is heard, valued and respected and that their needs are recognised as important³³. The same principle applies to how we respond to those who are linked to the survivor in any way or for whom the impact of abuse in the Church continues to cause distress and concern.

³² Section C: Raphael Counselling Service leaflet

³³ Section C: Advice on making a Complaint/Allegation

4.3.4 In all cases, the person has a right to be heard. However, there might be situations when they are seeking direct information about the accused, about survivors or about details of the allegation. In all such circumstances, confidentiality must be upheld. Depending on what the person is seeking, onward referral to services or information might be appropriate. In most cases, access to someone with expertise in Safeguarding would be required. As far as possible, the person must be offered a choice of location for the meeting and a choice of the gender and ordained/lay status of the person whom they will meet.

4.4 We follow established protocols for making referrals to the Raphael Counselling Service.

4.4.1 *The Raphael Counselling Service* is provided by *Health In Mind*, an established Counselling provider that is independent of the Catholic Church.

4.4.2 When a survivor comes forward to a Diocese or Religious Institute to seek counselling, or is offered counselling when he/she make a disclosure of abuse, the following steps must be followed:

- Counselling is offered if the allegation has been, or will now be, reported to *Police Scotland*, even if the perpetrator is deceased.
- The counselling options are explained by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or the designated person from the Religious Institute.
- A referral for counselling is sent to *Health in Mind* by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or the designated person from the Religious Institute.
- The survivor is fast-tracked for professional assessment by *Health In Mind*. This includes discussing whether counselling is appropriate at this moment and which modality. If the person is in the care of a psychiatrist, then confirmation of their suitability for counselling is required.
- Face-to-face counselling sessions are offered, with an option for telephone counselling, if preferred.
- The person will see the same therapist each week and appointments can be offered across Scotland.
- Initially 12 sessions are offered, with an option to extend if required.
- When the counselling finishes, the person completes an evaluation form for *Health In Mind*.

4.5 We follow established protocols for liaising with professional agencies when supporting survivors.

4.5.1 There are various professional agencies with whom the Catholic Church currently liaises, through the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service nationally and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Groups locally. The purpose of this liaison ranges from assisting someone who is seeking further support through to consultation on Safeguarding policy development. These agencies include:

- National Confidential Forum
- Future Pathways: Scotland's In Care Survivor Support Fund
- Health in Mind Counselling
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Government Survivor Scotland Strategy
- Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELSIS)